

367 Change of use from importation, short term storage, shredding and distribution of green waste for use as a soil improver for agricultural benefit to a waste wood shredding operation at West End Farm, Upper Froyle, Alton (Application No. 22111/031).

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Director of Economy, Transport and Environment (Item 7 in the Minute Book) regarding an application for a wood-waste shredding operation at West End Farm in Alton.

The officer confirmed that the Committee had visited the site on the 28 January. Members were reminded of the site and its surroundings including its location next to Roundwood SINC, the location of the village of Upper Froyle and its conservation area, the topography, landscape character, and the footpaths to be used as a haul route. Nearby residential properties and businesses were pointed out to Members.

The application was to permanently re-use an agriculturally linked green waste recycling site, which already had a haul road connecting it to the road network. It was understood the existing use had ceased over a year ago. The proposal was for an independent wood waste recycling operation based on the same working hours, haul route, lorry numbers and tonnage as the existing agricultural green waste permission. It involved some internal regrading /minor changes to the site bunding and included a wood shredder and screener. There was no mains electricity, sewage or mains water on the site. Chemical toilets would be provided, along with portable generators. The haul route to the site involved also using in parts two public Rights of Way footpath 15 and 27.

It was explained that no objection had been received to the application from the Rights of Way Officer, Environmental Health Officer or the Highway Authority subject to conditions. It was highlighted through recent photographs that the haul routes sharing the Rights of Way was a single width agricultural track, currently along footpath 27 in poor state of repair and rising up towards the site on higher ground. It was highlighted to Members that County Planning considered there was a fundamental difference between the existing permission which was for shredding of green waste and spreading it across agricultural land and this independent wood waste proposal that was not linked to the agricultural land in any way. It was also highlighted that it was considered that local people tend to be more understanding and accepting of essential agricultural linked operations even though they may generate traffic, but that running heavy goods vehicles and articulated lorries through a conservation area and along haul routes not designed for such an independent waste operation could be viewed as being quite a different matter and could be considered in a different policy and planning context.

It was explained to Members that the committee report referred to case law which indicated that they could consider this application afresh – independently of existing permission - on the basis that the existing permission was allowed as an exceptional departure from policy because it was a sustainable agricultural operation and very different to the current application. County Council solicitors had advised on the case law, copies of

which had been provided to Members. The officer stated it was considered that the site, even though it was hard surfaced and bunded, was not the type of sustainable location that the County Council was aiming to promote through its Core Strategy for permanent independent waste operations. Taking all matters into consideration, on balance, the application was being recommended for refusal for the reasons outlined in the committee report. The Committee was told that the existing permitted operation was granted as an exception to policy as it was supportive of the agricultural use of the surrounding land.

The Committee received three deputations on this item. Councillor Nick Whines from Froyle Parish Council spoke of the Parish Council's general support of recycling generally, but felt that this site was not in a good location and the area was not suitable for HGV's.

Mike Greslow and Mike Garfield spoke on behalf of the applicant and felt it was a good site that could be put to suitable use. There was no current requirement to restore the site and the applicant felt that occupying the site and making it operational would be a better alternative than leaving the site in its current state. SITA had agreed that the current application was indistinguishable from the previously accepted application, and the applicant were happy to set up a liaison panel if the Committee felt this was necessary.

Finally, County Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee spoke of the iconic and pretty village and how despite being bunded, the site was overlooked by buildings in the conservation area as well as the South Downs National Park. Councillor Kemp-Gee also addressed concerns that material for the site would be shipped from outside Hampshire, and therefore would have an impact on carbon footprint. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were some exceptional circumstances where Brownfield operations were permitted on Greenfield sites, this was not felt a suitable location or justifiable departure from policy.

During questions of the deputations, it was confirmed that the maximum lorry movements had never been achieved by the previous applicant on the site.

During questions of the officer, it was understood that the previous use stopped because it was no longer viable to operate the 'shred and spread' method of recycling due to changes in government guidelines. It was also noted that the Ramblers had not been consulted as a non-statutory body and consultation had taken place with Rights of Way, and the South Downs National Park had not been asked to comment on the application due to its distance from the site.

In debate, the Committee agreed that the site had no reason to be in the area as it was not used in an agricultural way within Alton, and therefore could be placed anywhere with the same effect.

RESOLVED

a) Permission for the Change of use from importation, short term storage, shredding and distribution of green waste for use as a soil improver for agricultural benefit to a waste wood shredding operation at West End Farm, Upper Froyle, Alton (Application No: 22111/031) (Site Ref: EH155) was refused planning permission for the following reasons:

1) The development is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 in that the proposed development is not sustainable and does not meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2) The proposed development is contrary to Policy DC8 of the Hampshire Portsmouth & New Forest National Park Minerals and Waste Core Strategy 2007 in that there would be an unacceptable adverse noise, dust and pollution impact by HGV traffic using Colthouse Lane to the amenity and quality of life of those residents residing in properties fronting or backing onto Colthouse Lane and to the amenity of users of footpath No 15 and 27 where sections of those footpaths also form part of the site haul route.

3) The proposed development is contrary to policies DC 3 of the Hampshire Portsmouth Southampton & New Forest National Park Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (2007) in that there would be a an adverse impact on the existing tranquil farmland landscape character caused by the development - in particular from the regular daily movements of associated HGVs accessing and egressing the site via the haul route which is also for part of its length statutory public Rights of Way.

4) The proposed development is contrary to policies DC4 of the Hampshire Portsmouth Southampton & New Forest National Park Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (2007) in that it would impact on the quality and character of the Upper Froyle Conservation Area and Listed buildings at the junction of Ryedown Lane with Colthouse Lane.

Voting:

Favour: 15 (unanimous)